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THE WISDOM OF Publick Piety DISCOURSED, IN A SERMON

PREACHED

Before the Right Honourable

THE

Lord MAYOR and ALDERMEN

Of the CITY of

LONDON,

At the GUILD-HALL Chappel,

Septemb. xxviii. 1679.

By *EDMUND SERMON*, Master of ARTS, and late of St. *Mary* HALL in *OXFORD*.

LONDON,
Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishop*'s Head in St. *Paul*'s Church-Yard, 1679.

giving the assistance of Your favour to the Discourse which is here offered to You. It is a Discourse which came forth with as great disadvantages as can well be supposed; the composing of it being incommoded with the peevishness of an obscure Author; and the delivery of it obstructed by such an indisposition, as for a space deprived him of the use of memory and speech. An accident which as it was unhappy in giving a disturbance to such an Auditory; so possibly it might have the good effect upon some minds, to make the impressions of some things upon them more deep and effectual. However, what it was Your patience first to stay for, it was Your goodness afterwards candidly to interpret. And I wish that the Discourse which could not be so well heard, were more worthy of Your sight and perusal. But such as it is, I humbly Dedicate to Your favourable acceptance, as an imperfect description

ption of that Moderation and Prudence; which, as it hath made Your Government of a Great City so useful and advantageous to it, in a tumultuous and distracted Time; so may it ever continue to be as successful to promote the benefit of Publick Peace and Order: which is the Prayer of

Right Honourable,

Your most humbly devoted

in all Observance,

EDMUND SERMON.

The EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

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EDMUND SERMON.

A SERMON

ON

JAM. III. XIII.

Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

THE reasonable Soul being the excellency of Man's nature, and wisdom and knowledge the perfection of that; no wonder that all who have any respect for themselves, and that value the honour of their Creation, should ardently affect those accomplishments of the mind, or at least the opinion and repute of them.

It was not without good reason, that our Saviour declared the highest punishment to be due to him who should say to another, *Thou fool*. [Mat. 5.22.]

5. 22.] that he particularly ſaid concerning ſuch a reproacher of his neighbour, that he was in danger of Hell-fire. Becauſe the imputing of folly to a man, being in effect to degrade him from his manhood, and to rank him with a lower ſort of creatures that are void of reaſon, as it is a reflection upon God's workmanſhip, ſo it hath ever been by the univerſal reſentment of mankind, taken for one of the moſt unſufferable affronts and provocations that can be given.

So that nothing is more apt to diſſolve all the ties, and deſtroy all the endearments of common friendſhip, to ſtir up the malignity of choler and indignation, and conſequently to produce all the miſchiefs enſuing thereupon. Nothing doth ſooner exaſperate men to variance, aud engage them in the moſt irreconcilable quarrels and bloody combats.

For the moſt mean and degenerate ſpirit is even to impatience ſenſible of the infamy of ignorance and indiſcretion. And generally to tax men with lack of wit, is more unpardonable than to brand them with want of honeſty. 'Tis ſafer to impeach their morality than their underſtanding; and to diſparage their judgment is a more intolerable offence, than with the ſevereſt reflexions to expoſe their conſcience. And the reaſon is, be-

cauſe to thoſe who have any conſcience, the depriving them of reaſon is the ſame thing as the denying them religion; nay, 'tis the ſame thing as to make them beaſts, which are uncapable of the impreſſions of Divinity. And as for thoſe who have no conſcience, thoſe very men think it their intereſt to preſerve a reputation of policy and cunning, albeit they ſeldom uſe it, but to carry them through ſuch actions as are unconſcionable.

But though the World hath ſo much fondneſs and concern for the title of wiſdom, and eſteems it to be ſo very glorious and reverend; yet the unhappineſs of it is, that the moſt of men run away with the empty name of wiſdom, not knowing what particular thing is intended by it. Some general and confuſed conceit they have of ſomething that is very excellent and noble; but being ignorant of the ſpecialty wherein it conſiſts, they commonly run counter to their own aims, and flee from wiſdom whilſt they aſpire towards it. And ſeeing truth is but one, and the oppoſite miſtakes are infinite; 'tis no wonder that men ſhould invent as many ways to be wiſe, as they have of ſhewing themſelves vain and imprudent; no wonder that in this caſe their errors ſhould be manifold, when rightly to perſue wiſdom argues ſome

poſſeſſion of it, and nothing but diſcretion can truly inform us what it ſelf is.

Now in this variety of humane imaginations, the wiſdom of God interpoſeth its direction and umpirage; and to relieve the weakneſs of our minds, and to prevent the uncertainty and extravagance of our choice, gives us a diſtinct notion of the wiſdom which is properly ſo called; that ſo we might not be loſt in the maze of our own thoughts, but might clearly diſcern the way and method, by which we may ſucceſsfully ſteer towards that great attainment.

But ſeeing wiſdom directs us to that which is our crown and ornament, and ſeeing the glory of the beſt capacity lies in that exercise of it, into which life and action reduceth it; and ſeeing withall that every honourable employment is managed by proper rules and laws; 'tis eaſie to be conceived that ſuch inſtructions as reach to the truth of wiſdom, muſt extend to the due conduct and government of our actions.

And farther, in that the moſt perfect of our actions are thoſe that are publick, and that is moſt anſwerable to our capacity which we do in relation to our common league and ſociety with the reſt of mankind, it follows, that no precepts come up to the height of wiſdom, but thoſe that teach

us rightly to compose and order our conversations in the World. And therefore according to these measures St. *James* resolves us that important question, To whom the character of wisdom and knowledge truly belongs? as it is plainly expressed in the words of the Text, *Who is a wise man, &c.*

Where we need not stand critically to dispute, whether the Apostle meant, that a good conversation tempered with meekness is a demonstration of wisdom and knowledge; or that wisdom and knowledge oblige and direct men to such a conversation; it being in effect the same, which sense of the two we take; because if a good conversation be a proof of wisdom, then wisdom must oblige and direct us to it: and if wisdom doth oblige and direct us to such a conversation, nothing without that conversation can be a proof of wisdom.

And therefore to proceed; Two things are to be considered in the words.

(1.) That a good conversation is a principal sign of a wise and understanding man.

(2.) That meekness is an essential part of that good conversation which denominates a man truly wise and knowing.

(1.) A good conversation is a principal sign of a wise and understanding man. This will

appear evident whether we consult the Principles,

(1.) Of that wisdom which is revealed; Or,

(2.) Of that which is natural.

(1.) If we consult the principles of that wisdom which is revealed. For this wisdom teacheth us, that as our life was not given us by our own power, so it is not to be spent to our own purposes.

God hath made us sociable Creatures, and fitted us for conversing with those of our own frame; and therefore, not to have correspondence with those in whose nature we communicate, that is, not to perform those Offices for them which we are capable of doing, is to contradict the end of our Creation.

The fairest pretence that can be made for Mens withdrawing themselves from humane converse, and addicting themselves to solitude and retirement is this, that thereby they have freedom for those contemplations, from which company and business doth divert them.

But what, I pray are those Contemplations? If they are such nice and subtle things as exhaust Mens age and strength, and at last leave their Judgments unresolved, and their Vertue unimproved; I know no man of whom they are required,

quired, but contrariwise they are forbidden to all. But as for such as are more necessary and useful to the government of a Man's life, there needs no such long time to be spent for satisfaction about them. And as they are made obvious by an ordinary diligence, so when they are fully comprehended by one, it is his duty to impart them to others.

This, if any lover of privacy, and his own thoughts neglect as a thing not incumbent upon him; 'tis plain that he transgresseth the rules of that common justice, which if others should as little regard as himself, the world could not subsist. For, is not the Man who museth in his Cell, beholden to others for his temporal support? Do his lofty speculations and curious enquiries provide the Bread that he eats, or the Cloaths he puts on? If then he receive such benefit from the labours of other Men, common justice requires that according to his capacity he should make them some recompence. And no way is so convenient for making them a requital, as the allowing them the advantage of his Christian conversation with them.

'Tis true, Men may be allowed to live recluse for a season, in order to the preparing of themselves for a publick Office, so *John* the Baptist

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was in the Desarts until the time of his shewing unto Israel. [Luk. 1. 80.] So the Schools of the Prophets were places sequestred from common familiarity and business, and dedicated to the study of useful knowledge, such as might put them into the best capacity to receive the gift of prophecie, and the admonitions of God.

But then that gift in the *Jewish* Church was ordained for the benefit and edification of others, as well as it was afterwards in the Christian. So that notwithstanding the instance alledged, he that conceals himself within a Cloyster, and devotes himself to a perpetuity of solitariness, doth manifestly oppose the designs of privacy; he makes that his end which was only his way, confounds his education with his employment, and takes up his rest in that secrecy and retirement which was intended to fit him for the discharge of some publick trust.

But if it be incumbent upon Men to be of publick spirits, and to do their Generation service; and consequently to be of sociable tempers, and to converse with their Neighbours; 'tis as requisite that their conversation should be good. For it were better that we had no communication at all with Men, than that it should be such as *corrupts good manners*. And how much it is our

wisdom

wiſdom by what hath been dictated to us in the Goſpel, to walk honeſtly and without blame, is evident from hence, that *the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs,* [Rom. 1. 18.] and that *the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking vengeance of them that know not God, and that obey not the Goſpel,* [2 Theſſ. 1. 7, 8.] So that according to the Principles of Chriſtianity, 'tis our greateſt wiſdom to be of an upright converſation; becauſe the contrary is our damnation. And to ſhew how deplorable a ſtate of miſery it is to which an evil converſation leaves us liable, our Saviour hath plainly told us, [Mat. 18. 6.] that *whoſo ſhall offend,* that is, ſcandalize, or by wicked practice make to offend *one of thoſe little ones that believe in him; it were better for him that a Mill-ſtone were hung about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the Sea.* All which he will find to be true, when he is caſt into the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimſtone.

But a good converſation is not an argument of wiſdom, as wiſdom is only taken for a zealous care of our own welfare; but alſo as it implies ſtrength of reaſon, and ſoundneſs of judgment to take right methods, that this welfare may be

ſecured. For Religion doth not wholly conſiſt in being affectionately concerned for that which is ultimately to be deſired; but it requires ſoberneſs of mind, regularity of thought, and an underſtanding well informed, ſuch as is of ability to apprehend, and propoſe what is really conducive to our great advantage.

And what neceſſity there is of a Man's being very judicious, in order to his being capable of a good converſation, will appear upon more accounts than one. For if we conſider the frailties to which we our ſelves are ſubject; if we call to mind how many vain and enchanting fancies, how many ſtrong and pre-engaged affections, how many ſubtle inſinuations of our enemy, and how many ſurpriſing temptations of the World, do continually beſiege us, to bring us into bondage to folly and vice, we cannot but acknowledge that there is need of very great prudence and foreſight, of the moſt ſerious conſideration, and of the moſt ſtaid and watchful mind, to eſcape the dangers wherewith we are encompaſſed. And he that by ſhunning all thoſe ſnares can approve himſelf a Chriſtian, doth certainly ſhow himſelf to be a very great Man.

Again, one great law of Chriſtian converſation, is that we walk charitably, with reſpect and compaſ-

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ſion towards our weak Brethren. So that no Man's converſation is unblameable but his, who doth nothing whereby he cauſeth his Neighbour to offend. This is plainly and fully determined by the Apoſtle, [1 *Cor.* 8.] where he ſtates that great caſe of conſcience, of eating things offered in ſacrifice to Idols. For [*v.* 4.] he grants, that the thing in it ſelf is not abſolutely ſinful: becauſe he that knew that an Idol was nothing in the World, and that there was but one true God, might eat of thoſe meats as the gift of that God, giving thanks to him, and not paying any worſhip and honour to the Idol: But then he tells us [*v.* 7.] that the taking of this liberty might be prejudicial to ſome weak perſons, who having not ſo much judgment to diſtinguiſh as others, might by their example be encouraged to eat with *conſcience of the Idol*, as the expreſſion runs, that is, with ſome portion at leaſt of that reſpect which the Heathens gave to their Idols in their Feſtivals.

And the general rule that preſides in this caſe holds no leſs in all the parts of a Chriſtian's life: For in every action 'tis his duty to conſult, not only the integrity of his own conſcience, but alſo the ſafety of his Neighbours; and he is by the ſtricteſt law of religion bound upon pain of

damnation, to abſtain from any publick act, which by a probability of conſequence and natural tendency may induce his Neighbour to commit a ſin.

And where a Man is bound to walk ſo circumſpectly, there is need of very good diſcretion to make all things regular. He that muſt conſider all the weakneſs of others, and uſe caution that the ignorant may not be enſnared by his practice, muſt very well forecaſt in his mind what may be the circumſtances and events of actions; and this argues no ſmall dexterity of reaſon.

Nay farther, Chriſtianity doth not only oblige us to conſult the condition of the ſimple, but of the froward too. We may not tranſact at any rate as we pleaſe, with thoſe who are of crooked tempers. When they are unreaſonable, we muſt be diſcreet; and when they are mad and outragious, we muſt be calm and moderate. Juſt men muſt not ſlander, revile and threaten, or exerciſe revenge and cruelty, becauſe the Sons of *Belial* do ſo. The man of God, of what condition ſoever, muſt be gentle and patient. But when a Man is aſſaulted with inſolent provocations, not to be diſcompoſed and tranſported ſo as to act any thing unbeſeeming the gravity

vity of his judgment, or the dignity of his place is certainly an argument of a most admirable prudence, and demonstrates the government and command of himself to be very singular.

(2.) If we consult the principles of that wisdom which is natural, a good conversation will appear to be a principal sign of a wise and understanding Man. And that upon Two accounts.

(1.) Because a good conversation doth most conduce to a Man's preservation.

(2.) Because that administers the truest satisfaction.

(1.) Because it doth most conduce to a Man's preservation.

And because I would not have my arguments to be precarious, or give occasion to any to say that they take the advantage of a popular prejudice and opinion; I shall beg your leave to discourse it a little, as if I supposed my self to have to do with those to whom Scripture and Gospel is no authority.

To proceed then: 'Tis possible that many are not so well acquainted with the Fundamental maxims of truth and reason, and the course and government of the World, or have not so good a faculty to draw conclusions from those Principles,

ciples, as by the ſtrength of their own reaſoning to find out a God to whom belongs Power and Judgment. But then 'tis as certain, that by all the ſophiſtry and ſpeculation imaginable, no Man is able to prove that there is no ſuch Being, as governs and gives laws now, and will hereafter reward and puniſh Men according as their converſations have been good or evil. And therefore a ſtate of vertue is in wiſdom to be preferred before that of vice, upon the ſcore of ſafety and preſervation; becauſe however things be, a good Man cannot be miſerable hereafter, whereas a wicked man, though he be an Atheiſt, may for ought he knows be ſo eternally: and it is a dictate of wiſdom in caſe of uncertainty to avoid danger, and provide againſt the worſt that may be ſuppoſed to happen. The only objection that can be made againſt this, is, That uncertainty is not to be preferred before certainty; but to this religion ſometimes obliges us, when Perſecution ariſeth upon the account of it; for at ſuch time the keeping of our conſcience damnifies us in a preſent convenience, and for the ſake of what we expect we loſe that good which we have in ſure poſſeſſion.

But as plauſible as this objection may ſeem, it is eaſily ſilenced. For beſide that it reacheth

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not all times, let us but consider the vast disproportion that there is between the short age of Man, and that Eternity which infinitely exceeds all time: that in a very short space, it will be all one whether a Man lived here in plenty, or perished for want of Bread; yea, if we consider him in respect only to this World, that it will be all one whether ever he had had any Being in it or no: let us but consider how small the goods are which the Atheist possesseth, in comparison of the evils which he may justly fear; and we must conclude that it is no wisdom to keep such inconsiderable certainties, when we run a hazard that is infinitely more considerable than they. Especially when those present certainties are so uncertain, as that we are liable to the final loss of them every moment; and the pretended uncertainties are so far certain, that the best reason of Man doth oblige him to expect them.

(2.) A good conversation doth administer the truest satisfaction. For this only can make Men hope for a future blessedness. And what satisfaction is comparable to the stedfast looking to the recompence of the reward? This is a joy that the irreligious man wants: and to take him in the most favourable circumstances, it cannot but somewhat stun and afflict him in his delight

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to think, that after a little time he can enjoy it no more.

But ſuppoſe he ſaith that he hath no need of a holy comfort: that he can careſs himſelf with the diverſions of mirth, and fortifie his mind by pleaſures againſt all melancholy and ſorrowful preſages; yet it cannot be denied, but that the hope of real happineſs hereafter is a greater ſatisfaction, than barely not to be diſmayed with the terrors of Death and Judgment.

Beſides, ſeeing the Atheiſt cannot with all his art diſprove the Articles of our Faith; he hath no way to ſecure himſelf from the ſad jealouſies and ſuſpicions of future miſery, but by debauching his mind, and hurrying himſelf beyond all conſideration. And what wiſdom I pray is in that complacency, which prohibits the beſt uſe of our reaſon, and wretchedly enjoyns the underſtanding to withdraw.

Nor is this carnal ſolace of the irreligious Man only unſound and irrational, but (as all ſuch things are,) it is alſo unſtable: it accompanieth a Man when he hath leaſt need of it; but aſſoon as he is deſtitute of other helps, that forſakes him too. For upon conſideration of the whole matter, we ſhall find that this is a ſolace only for them, whoſe eſtates are plentiful, and conſtituti-

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ons firm; whoſe minds are not croſſed, nor their ſpirits decayed. It may attend Men whilſt they are rich and healthful; but when they fall under poverty or pain, it vaniſheth like a dream or ſhadow.

'Tis true indeed, if a Man be only poor, Atheiſm can preſcribe this remedy, to ſteal and filch his Neighbours goods, that his own ſubſtance may be encreaſed by it: which yet is but a deſperate remedy, where there is either pubick law and juſtice in a Nation, or but the natural dictate of ſelf-preſervation, as there is in all private men: and in a contention which is here to be ſuppoſed, 'tis very great odds but the pooreſt will be overcome.

And when this way of Men's making their condition better proves unſucceſsful, irreligion hath nothing better to propoſe to them, than by a ſtroke at their life to put an end to it. And this is all the comfort it can adminiſter to them in time of ſickneſs, when they are neither able to hurt others nor help themſelves; when their *ſoul abhors all manner of meat*; and *they ſay of laughter it is mad*; when the moſt pleaſant recreations are diſtaſtful to them. And is this a ſatisfaction equal to what the juſt Man hath, who in the critical minute of affliction and diſtreſs triumphs in

the proſpect of God's great ſalvation? How much better were it for a Man in anguiſh and torture to have hope in the everlaſting God? This hope would turn his very evils into helps, and make Death it ſelf to appear his greateſt advantage. So great ſupports has righteouſneſs in the worſt eſtate, and the ſpirit of a juſt Man *will ſuſtain his infirmities.* And ſo much may ſuffice to be ſpoken to the firſt thing conſiderable in the words, *viz.* That a good converſation is a principal ſign of a wiſe and underſtanding Man; I now proceed to,

(2.) The ſecond thing, which is, that meekneſs is an eſſential part of that good converſation which denominates a Man truly wiſe and knowing.

The truth of this will appear upon Three Grounds.

(1.) Becauſe meekneſs preſerves the World from trouble and diſquietneſs.

(2.) It is an advantage to Men's conference and diſcourſe.

(3.) It makes them ſucceſsful in their undertakings.

(1.) Meekneſs preſerves the World from trouble and diſquietneſs. It is upon theſe very terms commanded by our Saviour [Mat. 11. 29.] *Take*

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my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls.

'Tis the nature of meekneſs to calm the mind, and preſerve it from vexation. For it is contrary to wrath and fury; and therefore look how much trouble rage is to a Man's ſpirit, ſo much doth meekneſs help us to avoid.

Nor doth it only prevent the trouble and torment of anger, but it is alſo inſeparably united with other quieting Graces, ſuch as humility and contentment, by which means all fretting paſſions are ſtilled. For he that is of ſo ſerious a temper as not to be incenſed with provocations, can certainly avoid the follies of pride and diſcontent; he can reſt ſatisfied in a low place, wherein his gracious God puts him, and chearfully acquieſce in the diſpoſals of his wiſe providence.

And what a happineſs is it for a Man to enjoy ſuch peace and tranquillity of mind, and to be exempt from the diſturbances and turmoils of paſſion and luſt! This is to have a foretaſte of Heaven, and in ſome degree to be in an Angelical ſtate; whilſt in the midſt of thoſe occurrences which cut unwiſe Men to the heart, we can be quiet and unconcerned, ſing praiſes to God for all his works; and our Souls can with freedom return to their reſt.

Nor doth meekneſs only grant peace to a Man's own breaſt, but it alſo keeps the peace of the World. For the wrath of Man ſets on fire the whole courſe of Nature. Anger hath in it the true property of fire, which is to produce it ſelf in the ſubject upon which it works: and ſo the forcing of it ſtirs up ſtrife. And where is then the wiſdom of allowing it? It wracks the mind wherein it abides, and deſtroys its pleaſure; for he that is angry is certainly diſpleaſed; and he that is diſpleaſed, muſt want his complacency. Nor is this all, but it alſo gives continual occaſion of its own continuance. For it puts others into a heat like our own; thereby depriving us of the conſolation of their kindneſs and aſſiſtance. It makes us either contemptible or odious to them; and ſo the great comfort of Man's life, friendly ſociety, is utterly loſt.

(2.) Meekneſs is an advantage to Men's conference and diſcourſe.

He that would diſcourſe like a wiſe Man muſt firſt judge ſo; and he that would judge rightly, and be conſtant in it, muſt be of a ſedate ſpirit. For if his mind be diſturbed, he can neither learn, teach, nor uſe knowledge. He cannot learn. Now *Solomon* gives this account of a wiſe Man, [Prov. 1. 5.] *That a wiſe man will hear, and will encreaſe*

encreaſe knowledge; and a man of underſtanding ſhall attain unto wiſe counſels: It's a ſign of the greateſt ignorance, for a Man to preſume that he hath wiſdom enough; and it argues a taſt of knowledge, when a Man uſeth diligence to obtain it: inſomuch that were not our underſtandings naturally furniſhed with the firſt principles and common notions of wiſdom, we could not poſſibly ſtudy to advance and improve it.

But is any Man a lover of wiſdom? would he learn and find out what he hath not yet known? he muſt be very conſiderate, and ſeriouſly compare things together. And if ſo, it follows that he muſt be calm and diſpaſſionate. Becauſe the perturbations of the mind, darken, diſtract and confound the underſtanding: and the thoughts of wrathful men are too haſty and urgent, and thereupon too immethodical to be diſcreet. And if it be a matter of divine wiſdom, wherein ſpiritual illumination is required; the wrathful and unquiet ſpirit hath no reaſon to expect that: the promiſe of it being made particularly to the meek. [Pſal. 25. 9.] *The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way.*

Nor can a wrathful perſon inform another, For his paſſion puts him out of his conceptions: it

it transports him beyond his right ſenſe, and ſo diverts him from his proper method. Beſides he that would inſtruct, muſt not only comply with the capacity, but in ſome meaſure alſo with the temper of his Diſciples: as knowing how much a readineſs or averſion in the will doth diſpoſe the underſtanding to give or deny aſſent. But paſſion, if it meet with the more ſoft and tender diſpoſitions, terrifies and ſcares them out of their own thoughts; ſo that they have not the uſe of their own faculties. And if it hath to deal with the more ſtout and undaunted, the diſcouragement that it gives them doth but make them deſperate and harden them by degrees to an inflexible obſtinacy of reſolution.

For the heat of paſſion taking away the ſteady uſe of reaſon from the inſtructor, and by a natural efficacy propagating it ſelf in the learner, there is but little underſtanding to be found betwixt them; and then the appearance of wrath makes a Man ſo deteſtable and hateful, that when there is but a little reaſon left, it may well be thought it will be to no purpoſe.

And what farther ſhows the folly of paſſion; it renders men uncapable of uſing in any way the knowledge which they have learnt. For it diſturbs

ſturbs their reaſon, and makes their thoughts to be deſultory and incoherent. It puts them beſide the true uſe of their memory; for when there is not ſerious deliberation to guide it, it's recollections muſt needs be very caſual and uncertain. In this caſe men are led as brutes, by the diſorderly motions of fancy and appetite. And what licentious and irregular imaginations may intrude, when the guard of conſideration is reſigned to thoſe powers, the wandring diſcourſe of Lunaticks may ſufficiently inform us. So that meekneſs is a neceſſary qualification to preſerve us from extravagance, and is therefore an eſſential part of that converſation which denominates a Man truly wiſe and knowing.

(3.) Meekneſs makes men ſucceſsful in their undertakings. For 'tis eaſie to miſcarry in any attempt, wherein true diſcretion is not our guide: but when fury is in place, diſcretion is abſent.

It muſt be granted, that where-ever anger is, there is ſome cauſe or other in debate. But the wrathful man doth much thwart his own intention, in doing diſſervice to that intereſt for which he contends.

For like a furious Warrior he falls on raſhly, whilſt his adverſary keeps his ground, and watches an opportunity to attack him in that part which

which is weakeſt, and give him a blow where he can leaſt bear it.

But meekneſs gives a Man the advantage of a clear reaſon, and hath an art whereby it vanquiſheth both Parties and Neuters. It overcomes thoſe that are Parties in a quarrel, in that it tires them out. For though anger be troubleſome to a Man's ſelf, and though it be heightened by diſagreement and oppoſition, yet ſuch is the madneſs of it, that it deſires oppoſition and conflict, and nothing wearies out angry ſpirits more, than to ſee their indignation and fury ſlighted; and ſo when they have ſufficiently ſpent their virulency and rancour, wanting new fewel of provocation from others to maintain their flame, they quietly deſiſt; and when they find that notwithſtanding all impreſſions their adverſary remains unſhaken, they do like thoſe aſſailants, who quit the ſiege when they find the Fort to be impregnable.

And hence it may eaſily be conceived how much meekneſs may recommend a cauſe to byſtanders; who being diſintereſſed have no ſuch ſtrong prejudice to be ſubdued. For the effects of rage are abominable in the common ſenſe of humanity. Raillery, reviling, ſmiting, and the like, make a Perſon ſcandalous; and when he

he himself is accounted so bad, his cause and quarrel will not be esteemed much better.

What say the indifferent Men of such a Hotspur? this is an abusive, a scurrilous, and injurious fellow; he knows not what religion, and conscience, nor common civility is. We have reason to fear this Man's principles: For if we be not what he requires, he will deal with us in as bad a manner. We have reason to suspect this Man's cause; for if it were good, these outrages might be spared, as being both unsuitable and unuseful to it: If there be an evil in the circumstance of his quarrel, why may not there be in the substance of it? and if he make use of indirect ways, why may he not as well aim at an unjust end? Thus doth fury make the credit of a Man's cause sink in the estimation of indifferent Men.

Besides, what is more considerable for the making Men's ways unprosperous, seeing whatever the wrathful contend for, they must unavoidably be enemies to God and his Grace; it pleaseth him to curb their fury, and to put his hook into their nostrils, to defeat their purposes and blast their endeavours. For as the wrath of Man works not the righteousness of God, so neither will God suffer it to accomplish the will of Man. No: the rage of man must not govern the world;

and God forbid that it ever ſhould; that ever that rage ſhould prevail, which makes men not only as unreaſonable as brutes; but oftentimes as mercileſs and ſavage too. Excellently to this purpoſe ſpeaks *David*, [Pſal. 76. 7, 8, 9, 10.] *Thou, even thou art to be feared, and who may ſtand in thy ſight when once thou art angry? Thou didſt cauſe judgment to be heard from Heaven; the Earth feared and was ſtill, when God aroſe to judgment to ſave all the meek of the earth. Surely the wrath* of man ſhall praiſe thee: *the remainder of wrath ſhalt thou reſtrain.*

But will ſome ask, may we not then be angry? and may we not expreſs our indignation againſt diſhoneſt things in ſome ſeverity? Yea doubtleſs, not to be capable of anger is to be ſtupid. And that upon ſome accounts we may be ſevere with men, appears by the preſidents of Magiſtracy in the Law, and the rules concerning it in the Goſpel; as alſo by the example of *David* curſing the Churches enemies, of Chriſt ſharply rebuking the Scribes and Phariſees, and of *Paul* in his conflict with *Elymas* the Sorcerer. But then we muſt well weigh the occaſion, that our anger may be adjuſted to it, and not exceed the bounds of moderation.

And now having ſpoken thus much for the enforcing

enforcing of a good converſation, and of meekneſs, ſo eſſential a part of it; I ſhall conclude my Diſcourſe with a little Direction,

(1.) In order to a good converſation in general, that beſides imploring the help of the divine grace, you would be watchful and circumſpect, that you do not unadviſedly fall into ſnares. 'Tis wiſdom to foreſee and prevent the occaſions of ſinning. And if by chance a temptation overtake you, do not trifle and dally with it. Be ſerious in reaſoning with your ſelves againſt it; and remember what you have been taught, and what you believe. Conſider the matter well, and when you have perceived it to be ſinful, ſay with your ſelves, Do I not believe that for ſuch things God will bring me into judgment, and that for ſuch things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of diſobedience? Why then ſhould I to gratifie the incitement of a luſt, do this wickedneſs and ſin againſt God, and ſo pierce my ſelf through with everlaſting ſorrows?

(2.) In order to meekneſs in particular, beſides praying for the gift of the ſpirit of love and gentleneſs,

(1.) Uſe thoſe Conſiderations that may be Remedies againſt wrath and diſpleaſure.

Consider the weakness of laying the blame of your passion upon the occasion of it. Can that force you to be passionate without your consent and allowance? No, your selves must be accessary to your own indignation.

Consider besides, what weakness and inexperience of things it argues to be discomposed at things without us. Is not the course of the World such? and is there any better to be expected? shall our fury reduce things to a better state? When we have raged and tormented our selves never so much, our anger may indeed help to make things worse, but is the most unlikely means to put them into a better posture.

Consider again, that if there were no thwartings and provocations, there would be no need of such a vertue as meekness; nor would there be any such vertue at all. For if nothing crossed us, but all things went according to our mind, there would be no occasion nor trial of meekness, for it would be impossible that we should be otherwise than pleased. But because things will fall out oppositely to our desires and expectations, therefore meekness is enjoyned as a means to relieve us.

We may do well to consider withall, that if things happen so ill as to disquiet us, whether it

is not wiſdom to make the beſt that we can of them; and ſo whether it be not our wiſdom, inſtead of ſtrugling with a provocation, to ſuppreſs and ſtifle our reſentments of it.

And ſeeing anger is moſt frequently ſtirred up by the provocations that are given by Men; and ſeeing we are not angry with Men, but when we judge that they deal unduly with us; As it becomes us to ſee that this judgment be true, and that we do not unjuſtly apprehend a wrong, when there is none done to us; ſo upon condition that we are injured, it were worthy of our conſideration, how much it degrades a Perſon who hath the honour to be juſt, to ſtoop ſo low to the brutiſh, as to be wounded with a reſentment of their villany; and how much it is beneath the mind of ſuch a man to be diſordered by the rudeneſs of diſorderly men. The very being concerned at their inſolence doth but make it too plauſible, whilſt it ſhews them to be ſuch as deſerve conſideration. *Ye ſuffer fools gladly* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *ſeeing ye your ſelves are wiſe,* [2 Cor. 11. 19.] And ſaith the wiſe man, [Prov. 26. 4.] *Anſwer not a fool according to his folly, leſt thou alſo be like unto him*: that is, take notice of him no farther than is neceſſary to prevent the evil that may follow from the toleration of his pride and vanity. It being

a reproach to a wise man to submit his wisdom to the pleasure and controulment of a fool, who *rageth and is confident*: whose brutish passions first deprive him of sober sense, and then give him courage and boldness to expose his want of it. So true is that saying of *Solomon*, [Prov. 14. 29.] *He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.*

(2.) Avoid those worldly affections and desires, which are the primitive and fundamental incentives to anger, as Covetousness and Ambition. For these make Men competitors for the same things, and so stir up anger and emulation amongst them. One is displeased, because another carries away his profit; and another, because his Neighbour steps in between him and honour. And especially pride produceth the greatest animosities and heart-burnings amongst Men. Thus when a Man is puffed up with the wisdom of speculation, he is angry that others are not of his judgment; though they perhaps have more reason to be displeased with him, because he is not of theirs. And generally where Men have great thoughts of themselves, they expect great regard and observance from others; and this earnestness and confidence of expectation makes them wrathful

ful when they are disappointed. And how far their rage and discontent may go, and in what inhumanity it may end, as we do not know, so we need not to enquire; it being sufficient that we know thus much, that the effects of it are very sad and dismal.

Now the God of Patience and Consolation grant us to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed Dominion, Blessing and Praise, both now and for ever.

FINIS.

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